UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, : Docket #23-mj-02007

Plaintiff, :

-against- :

YANPING WANG, : New York, New York

March 22, 2023

Defendant.

----:

PROCEEDINGS BEFORE
THE HONORABLE SARAH NETBURN
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE

APPEARANCES:

For Plaintiff: UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK
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E X A M I N A T I O N S

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EXHIBITS

Exhibit Voir Number Description ID In Dire

1 2 THE DEPUTY CLERK: Your Honor, this is matter of United States v. Yanping Wang. Case is 3 number 23-mj-2007. 4 5 Starting with the Government, could you 6 please state your appearance for the record. 7 MS. MURRAY: Good morning, Your Honor. Juliana Murray and Micah Fergenson on behalf of the 8 9 United States. 10 THE COURT: Thank you. 11 MR. LIPMAN: Good morning, Your Honor. 12 Alex Lipman of Lipman Law PLLC and my colleague 13 Priya Chaudhry of Chaudhry Law PLLC here for the 14 defendant, Yanping Wang. 15 THE COURT: Thank you. Ms. Wang, can you 16 sorry -- go ahead. 17 MS. CHAUDHRY: The defendant is present 18 seated between us and being assisted by a Mandarin 19 interpreter. 20 THE COURT: Thank you. 21 Ms. Wang, is your interpreter device 22 working okay? 23 THE DEFENDANT: Yes. It's okay. THE COURT: Okay. If at any point you have 24 25 difficulty hearing through the interpreter, please

let us know. Okay?

THE DEFENDANT: Understood.

THE COURT: All right. So in preparation for this proceeding, I've reviewed the pretrial services report that was prepared about two weeks ago, maybe a week ago, when the defendant was initially here. And I have the transcript from March 15th when the defendant was presented before Judge Parker, which I've reviewed.

I understand that Judge Parker set conditions for the defendant's release, required that the conditions be satisfied before she be released. And I understand that we are here potentially for a Nebbia hearing. Nobody has submitted anything else to me, so I don't know anything else than now what I've shared with you.

MS. MURRAY: Yes, Your Honor. So we received a call last night from defense counsel, yesterday evening. They provided a number of potential cosigners. We've received documents for five of those and interviewed four and had not gotten to the point where we had two cosigners that we approved.

So last evening, defense informed us that they wanted what they referred to as a Nebbia

1 hearing. I understood the defense was going to file 2 something for the Court overnight, but we just 3 notified arraignment and arranged for defendant to be produced. So I will leave it to defense what 4 5 they want to cover here today. 6 THE COURT: Okay. Can I ask you just to 7 move the microphone --8 MR. LIPMAN: I'm sorry. 9 THE COURT: -- directly in front of you. 10 MR. LIPMAN: Your Honor, the reason we are here is because the Government has unreasonably, in 11 our view, refused to approve the cosigners we 12 13 proposed. So, as the Government said, we gave them 14 more than five names. We gave them something like 15 nine names, and they interviewed -- they have documents for five. They interviewed four. They've 16 17 rejected all of them. 18 And the reason we're here is because we are 19 going to ask Your Honor to either approve the people 20 we've proposed or change the bail conditions in such 21 a way that Ms. Wang can satisfy the bail conditions 22 and be released. So if I may just start before, as 23 an initial map, right, since Your Honor has reviewed

the pretrial report, Your Honor can see that the

pretrial recommendation is much more -- much less --

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1 THE COURT: Let me stop you for one second. 2 MR. LIPMAN: Yeah. THE COURT: I'm not really inclined to 3 overrule my colleague who heard bail arguments and 4 5 set a bail condition. So I'm not sure that's what I want to do, if that's what you're asking me to do. 6 7 If you're asking me to consider the reasonableness of the proposed sureters I understand under the law, 8 9 I can do that. 10 I don't know anything about what that 11 standard of review is, and I don't have any names or documents, so I don't know that that's something I 12 13 can do from the bench. 14 MR. LIPMAN: Well, Your Honor, let me set 15 the stage for this, and maybe that'll help. 16 THE COURT: Okay. 17 MR. LIPMAN: Ms. Wang is a political 18 refugee from China. She is a part of a movement of 19 people who are opposing the Chinese Communist Party. 20 And it's a pretty big movement. And because of her 21 participation in the movement as a very senior 22 person, she cannot return to China. If she did, she 23 would be arrested at the airport and probably 24 executed within days. 25 So she's here. She lost her family in

1 China. Her husband was required to divorce her. 2 She has a son she hasn't seen in something like nine 3 years because she's not allowed to be in contact with him. Her father died without seeing her. She 4 5 can't contact her brother anymore. She used to, but all of the family members have been arrested at one 6 7 point or another and told to cut off all contact with her. Okay? 8 9 So the only people with whom she has 10 contact are people who are part of this movement or in some way related to the main defendant in this 11 case. The Government is well aware of this. 12 13 we actually agreed to the \$5 million bond and two 14 cosigners, when we did that we understood that the 15 Government understood, and we had a conversation 16 about it, that the people who would cosign for her 17 are not going to be family members. 18 Her only friends are people who are in this

Her only friends are people who are in this circle, and they're willing to sign for her, and they think that they have moral suasion over her.

THE COURT: Sorry. She's been living in the United States since 2017; is that correct?

MR. LIPMAN: She has.

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THE COURT: And in those six years, she hasn't befriended anybody who's not within that

movement?

MR. LIPMAN: What she does is she works, and then she goes home, and then she works. And her entire life, during this entire time, has been moving from her apartment to where she works and back. She actually -- the answer is that her entire world is people -- people in this -- people in this community. We did have one person who is a very well-known individual in the United States who is not part of that -- is not Chinese, and he volunteered to post a property worth two and a half million dollars to secure her bond.

We proposed that if he were -- if he were to do two and a half million dollars of his property, and she confessed judgment on her apartment, that's three and a half million dollars. They have \$130,000 in cash that they seized from her apartment. And then there is an account with approximately, I want to say, 4- to 500,000 dollars in it.

We proposed to put all of that together for \$4 million security for the bond and then so that they could, you know, approve the people that they had interviewed, and they refused. So we are at a point now where they won't approve the people we

1 proposed because they are either not connected to 2 her or too poor or connected with the main defendant and that kind of short circumstance. There's 3 nothing we can do. 4 5 THE COURT: Sorry. They rejected the 6 \$2.5 million property from somebody else because 7 that person was not connected? MR. LIPMAN: No, not because he was not 8 9 connected. He is a very well-known individual, and 10 he has his own legal problems. He wasn't going to 11 cosign the bond. He was just going to put up the property to secure her bond, and they rejected him 12 13 because they said that he was a convicted felon, 14 which, frankly, that's not -- neither here nor 15 there. There is no requirement that incapacitates 16 somebody who is convicted felon from securing 17 somebody else's bond. THE COURT: And that person was prepared to 18 19 basically hand over the deed to the Government? 20 MR. LIPMAN: Correct, he was prepared to 21 confess judgment on his property. 22 Now, we now -- potentially, we might have 23 other people who might be willing to do something

like that, but the key issue here is this:

three people that they interviewed -- there are

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1 three people they interviewed they have no issues 2 with, as far as I can tell, just as far as I can 3 tell. And they won't approve them. First, they told us that they won't approve 4 5 them because they don't have enough assets. Okay? 6 So then we had subsequent conversations in which 7 they said, well, the other problem is that they are too remote from her. They don't have moral suasion 8 9 over her. Well, they think that they do, which is 10 why they're doing this. 11 And, by the way, Your Honor, even if they 12 don't have the \$5 million to stand behind this bond, 13 they are financially responsible people. They would 14 be ruined if the bond -- she defaulted on the bond. 15 One of them is a lawyer. We offered another lawyer 16 who is -- who is a -- we gave them the name. 17 didn't run it down because they told us straight 18 away that he won't work. 19 But we offered an IT professional -- I 20 think two IT professionals, if memory serves. 21 THE COURT: Two what professionals? 22 MR. LIPMAN: IT. 23 THE COURT: IT.

MR. LIPMAN: We offered -- they interviewed

one of the lawyers. He is not rich now, but he does

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1 have his own practice. He is a financially 2 responsible person, and the bond is secured with a 3 confession judgment on her apartment. She's going to be at home with an ankle monitor. She's confined 5 to her apartment. She can't leave it unless she 6 comes to visit us. 7 How do we get out of this? THE COURT: Okay. Let me hear from the 8 9 Government. Thank you. 10 MS. MURRAY: Your Honor, the Government's 11 view is that this proceeding is premature. There is 12 a process for the Government to interview and 13 evaluate the qualifications of potential cosigners. 14 As Your Honor noted, a week ago, Judge Parker 15 imposed conditions, and she agreed with both the 16 Government and Pretrial that those conditions needed 17 to be met before Ms. Wang could be released. 18 One of those conditions was two qualified 19 cosigners on a \$5 million bond. The reason that 20 we're here today, as I understand, is because the 21 defense is unhappy with the Government's 22 determination that various of the names that they 23 provided are not qualified.

There are a couple of points I want to make, and I don't want to get into the details of

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the individual because Your Honor doesn't have the information in front of you right now. But as an example, the individual who is willing to pledge the 2.2 million in property, defense never provided us with the address for the property. So we weren't able to run it down to find out how much equity was in the property, what was the mortgage, what was the source of funds used for the property.

And that prominent individual who they said owned the property is an individual who is very involved in the fraud in this case. And this is a billion-dollar fraud that was spearheaded by an individual known as Ho Wan Kwok or Miles Guo. The individual who was going to pledge the property has been involved in several organizations that are alleged to be instrumentalities of the fraud. And Ms. Wang is the chief of staff for Mr. Guo. She runs all of his companies.

A couple of the individuals, we did advise defense counsel, we couldn't even in good faith interview as potential cosigners. One of the lawyers that Mr. Lipman mentioned is the outside counsel for three of the different entities that operated this fraud scheme. His law firm had an escrow account that held tens of millions of dollars

of fraud scheme funds over the course of the charged conspiracy. That is not a person that we feel comfortable, even if he has the financial means to cosign a bond for the defendant.

We have expressed a willingness to work with defense on potential cosigners, particularly in light of their claims. Which we understand that Ms. Wang doesn't have family here, so the moral suasion angle might be different.

But we can't be in a position where Judge Parker made a very reasoned judgment on the facts, and the Government agrees that in light of the substantial flight risk that Ms. Wang creates, in light of both her political asylum status, the strength of the Government's evidence, the amount of time she's facing, and her global network of Miles Guo supporters who clearly are willing to put their necks out and sign a bond, even though some of them have only met her once or twice or only speak with her a couple of times.

In light of that substantial flight risk, we need to be assured that we have qualified cosigners on this bond. That's all we're doing. It is a process wherein for every cosigner that we evaluate, we request information, we request

documents, we conduct an interview, we make an evaluation, and we engage in dialogue. And if we think that person isn't qualified, we ask for another name.

In this case, we have been given names in the abstract without even having their documents. Defense has pushed us to approve them in the abstract. With respect to the \$2.2 million property that they proposed would secure the bond, for example, we received a call. They said they had an individual, didn't name the individual at first, who would put up 2.2 million in property. We asked for the address. They said, "We'll get it to you. Will you just agree in principle today?"

Your Honor, again, we have a process of going through this, and we are not slow rolling this by any stretch. We have spent a substantial amount of time in the last week running down each of the names and interviewing the people that defense counsel has brought before us.

If defense is in a position where they want to argue that the Government's assessment is unreasonable, then under the statute under 18 U.S.C. 3142(c)(1)(B)(xii), for the Court to approve or determine the appropriateness of an unapproved

surety, the Court needs to have before it all of the documents and assets and evidence underlying that surety's financial situation because the standard is that the Court can, on its own, approve that surety if such surety has a net worth which has sufficient unencumbered value to pay the amount of the bail bond.

So we're happy to keep working with defense. We would like to do that to see if there are potentially qualified cosigners. But if we get to a point where defense feels there aren't, the next step would be for the defense to gather together the supporting materials for proposed cosigners, submit them to the Court, and then if the court makes its own independent evaluation that those people have \$5 million in unencumbered assets sufficient to support the bond, then I think their application would appropriately be before the Court.

THE COURT: Thank you.

MR. LIPMAN: Your Honor, what the Government just said, essentially, is this: We interview these people, make a judgment about whether they're appropriate or not, but the only questions that they need to actually answer are, number one, is this a financially responsible

person, and, two, do they have moral suasion over the defendant.

THE COURT: But why wouldn't the assessment of whether somebody was a financially responsible person include the responsible part? Meaning if, for instance, the lawyer that you proposed is, in the Government's light, at least involved on some level with the fraud, even if that person has assets, then that person is not responsible in the Government's light.

MR. LIPMAN: Well, that person --

THE COURT: And so if you want to make an application to the Court, that's one thing. But that's not an unreasonable position for the Government to take.

MR. LIPMAN: Your Honor, in that situation, regardless of what the Government thinks he did or didn't do, he would be on the hook for \$5 million.

And the idea of a financially responsible person is a little bit of an interesting question. The people that they refuse to -- they interviewed three people, one a lawyer, two -- I think they're both IT professionals. They don't have a problem with those issues -- with those people.

What they said to us is, these people don't

have enough assets. Well, you know what? They don't have enough assets. But if Ms. Wang were to default on the bond, they would be in serious financial troubles. And they understand that.

THE COURT: Right. Unless they fled.

MR. LIPMAN: But there's no -- even they do not suggest that. They're completely unrelated to her or to the main defendant. I mean, they are people who know her and are willing to cosign a bond for her, but even the Government doesn't claim there's any issue with them, that they're going to flee or anything like that. One of them is a lawyer practicing in Chicago. He's not going anywhere, Your Honor. He's not making a ton of money, but he's not going anywhere.

And one of them is an IT professional who's actually not Chinese, and he's willing to cosign bond. Again, he's not a rich person, but his financial life would be ruined if Ms. Wang were to default on the bond. And he understands that, and he thinks that he's willing to sign.

And by the way, he spoke with his wife before he agreed. They both agreed to do so. So these people making serious, serious commitment, they all understand what's going on. They are

financially responsible. They're not related to the fraud in any way whatsoever.

THE COURT: And so what relief are you seeking today?

MR. LIPMAN: What I'm asking the Court to do is to do one of two things: Either direct them to accept the three people being interviewed with whom they didn't have -- about whom they didn't have -- they didn't have an issue with them other than they told us that these people were not sufficiently rich, or alternatively, that you alter the bail conditions in such a way that we could actually reasonably meet.

Because if the requirement is that somebody cosigns a bond over who has moral suasion over Ms. Wang, all of those people are in Mr. Guo's orbit, and none of them are going to work. Her best friend is his daughter. She can't sign. She can sign for other reasons, maybe, but she can't sign. We proposed her. They rejected him. They have good reasons for doing it -- or I don't know if they are good reasons. They say they have good reasons for doing it.

But they rejected her best friend's boyfriend as a cosigner. They rejected another

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person who works Mr. Guo as a cosigner. We asked them. There are people who -- she was a senior 3 person in this organization. She interacted with several senior people. We asked -- we gave them the 4 names, we said how about this person, that person. 5 No, no, no, because they're involved in the fraud or 6 7 they're involved in the movement or they're involved in this, involved in that. 8 9 Well, what are we supposed to do? We found 10 three people they interviewed who are financially 11

responsible, willing to sign, and did not even -they don't claim are involved in defrauding anyone.

MS. MURRAY: Your Honor, if I just may briefly respond to that point. I do want to note I don't believe there's any issue that's ripe for the Court at this point procedurally or under the law. And I don't think that the first prong of relief that Mr. Lipman suggested is appropriate, for the Court to force the Government to approve cosigners. That is not the legal standard.

The three individuals Mr. Lipman just mentioned, I want to note, while we said we could get comfortable with them as financially responsible persons, all three of those individuals are victims of the fraud. They all invested in various of the

different fraudulent arms of this scheme. The fact that they are willing to sign a bond and they have potential means to support some portion, by no stretch, 5 million, but some portion of that bond is independent of the other prong of the assessment, which is moral suasion.

If they sign the bond, what influence do they have over Ms. Wang appearing in future court appearances to protect the assets and the \$5 million debt that could be imposed on people she and her coconspirators have already victimized in the course of this fraud?

We have valid bases to have not accepted the cosigners who have been presented. We have a process for reviewing and approving cosigners. And if there are certain people the defense wants to bring to the Court's attention, they need to provide the supporting documentation and make an argument, and the Court can make an independent investment.

THE COURT: Okay. I think --

MR. LIPMAN: Your Honor, just very briefly, these people understand what they're doing. They're members of a movement of people who are dissidents and are opposing Chinese Government, communist party. Ms. Wang is a very well-known person. They

1 know who she is. They understand the allegations. 2 One of them specifically asked me, before he agreed 3 to do it, to send him the complaint, which I did. And he took time to review the complaint before he 4 5 gave me permission to contact the Government. Okay? So they know what they're doing. They 6 7 understand that the Government used them as victims. They are prepared to sign. 8 9 THE COURT: Okay. I tend to agree with 10 Ms. Murray that there is not an issue before the 11 Court. I'm certainly not going to direct people I 12 don't even know -- I haven't even had names, much 13 less any information. I'm not going to direct the 14 Government to accept these miscellaneous John Does as sureties. That's not how this works. And I 15 don't believe sufficient time has elapsed that 16 17 justifies revisiting Judge Parker's bail conditions. 18 What I'd like to do is, first, direct you, 19 Mr. Lipman. It sounds like you haven't given all 20 the information to the Government specifically with 21 respect to this person who has property that they 22 might post. You know, they need to do their job. I 23 take Ms. Murray at her word that they are not slow

walking this. They are making every effort to

locate somebody that the Government is comfortable

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with. But you do need to provide information so that they can do their job too. So you need to get that information to the Government as soon as possible.

I'd like to set a date for an appropriate motion based on what you are proposing. And I guess the question, Mr. Lipman, is when do you want that motion to be filed? I think it does need to be filed with supporting documents and all of the information necessary, and I think it'll just be assigned to the judge who's on duty here. That judge will need to review the information as well.

So I don't know how long it'll take you to assemble the paperwork that you would need to assemble to satisfy the Court that the person that you're proposing that you allege the Government has rejected is inadequate and the Court should order the Government to accept that person.

So I want to give you enough time to make a motion that's appropriate and supported, but also to continue working with the Government, because I don't hear the Government saying they don't see a way out of this morass. They just need additional information. And it may be as you began,

Mr. Lipman, you know, there's a million-dollar

property. There's a 2.2, 2.5 million dollar property of somebody else. There's a half a million dollars in a bank that's frozen. It may be that the Government can work with you to cobble something together.

But, for instance, if you have a \$2.5 million house in the Hamptons that has \$100,000 in equity in it, and the rest is owned by a bank, then that's not going to be helpful for your client. You need to get that information to the Government. They just have no idea.

MR. LIPMAN: Your Honor, just to be clear, in the case of this famous individual, the Government says they didn't provide us the information. They knew who it was, and the question was not what the property was. The question was were they going to approve him at all. And they didn't. They said -- they told us they ran it up the flag pole, couldn't do it.

It wasn't because the property wasn't appropriate that they turned it down. It wasn't because there was not enough equity in it. It was because they don't like who it is. And the problem that we have and the reason we are in this courtroom today, Your Honor, is because their criteria keeps

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     shifting. First, there was an understanding, an
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     explicit understanding -- I told them right away,
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     look, there are no sisters. There are no brothers.
     There are no aunts. Okay? It's going to be
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     somebody else.
               They said, "All right; we understand that."
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     So we gave them names. These people are not rich
     enough. Okay. Now they're telling you that they
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     also don't have moral suasion. Well, you knew that
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     before when I first gave you the names. I feel like
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     we're not getting anywhere because things are
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     shifting. And I think what they're doing is they're
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     deliberately trying to keep her in in order to put
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     pressure on her so that she becomes their friends,
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     your Honor. I think that's what's really going on
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     here.
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               Friday. We'll file on Friday or tee it up
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     on Friday?
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              MS. CHAUDHRY: We'll file on Friday.
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              MR. LIPMAN: We can file on Friday, Your
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     Honor.
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              THE COURT: Okay.
              MR. LIPMAN: And, Your Honor, we will
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     continue working with them, but at a minimum, it
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     would be helpful to us if the Court could at least
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admonish them to work with us in good faith.

THE COURT: I'm not going to admonish them because I don't believe that they are not working with you in good faith. So I'm happy to have your application. I hope nothing that's in the application is information that you haven't provided to the Government, because what I'm hearing from the Government, and I don't really need to get into the sandbox to figure out who's right or who's wrong here, is that they haven't received all the information that they need from you. So I hope that you continue to provide that to them.

I'll direct the Government to expeditiously respond to the proposals and to make a good faith assessment of those folks. I'm not going to admonish you that you haven't done that yet, but that's certainly your obligation, and I expect you to do so. So this motion is going to be filed on Friday.

When would the Government like to file its opposition?

MR. FERGENSON: Without knowing what this motion is going to look like, Your Honor, it's a little difficult to say.

THE COURT: How about if you file it

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     Wednesday, and we set a conference for the following
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     Friday?
              MR. FERGENSON: That seems reasonable, Your
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     Honor.
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               THE COURT: Okay. So there's going to be
      something filed on Friday, which is March 24th.
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     There's going to be an opposition filed on
     Wednesday, which, if my calculation is right, is
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     March 29th.
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               Is that right, Ms. Fletcher?
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               THE DEPUTY CLERK: That's right.
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               THE COURT: And then I will work with, I
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     believe, Judge Lehrburger, who will be hearing this,
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     for a date for the conference, which will be held on
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     March 31st.
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               If between now and March 31st, the parties
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     are able to work this out, which is my hope, you
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     should obviously notify the Court as soon as
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     possible. And I do think the parties can figure out
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     a way to come up with a resolution here for this
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      issue. This is not the first time the Government
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     has faced complications of this sort, so I'm
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     confident you can figure something out.
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     obviously, if you can't, then the Court will see you
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     the following Friday.
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               All right. Anything further?
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               MR. FERGENSON: No, thank you, Your Honor.
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               MR. LIPMAN: Thank you, Your Honor.
               MS. CHAUDHRY: Your Honor, did we have a
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      time for next Friday?
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               THE COURT: We don't.
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               MR. LIPMAN: Okay.
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               THE COURT: We'll set it once -- it's going
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      to be Judge Lehrburger.
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               MS. CHAUDHRY: Thank you.
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C E R T I F I C A T E I, Marissa Mignano, certify that the foregoing transcript of proceedings in the case of UNITED STATES v. YANPING WANG, Docket #23-mj-02007, was prepared using digital transcription software and is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. Signature _____ Marissa Mignano Date: March 27, 2023